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Captain John Kendall, R.C.



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RHYMES OF THE EAST



Rhymes of the East

AND

Re-collected Verses

BY D U M - D U M

AUTHOR OF
'AT ODD MOMENTS'
'IN THE HILLS'

LONDON
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE
AND COMPANY, LTD.

1905

Edinburgh: T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to His Majesty

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TO

MY MOTHER

960607



AUTHOR'S NOTE

NEARLY all the verses that now make their first appearance in book form are reprinted from *Punch*, by kind permission of Messrs. Bradbury and Agnew. The rest I have taken from two little books that were published in Bombay during my last (and, I suppose, final) tour of service in India. They contained a good deal of work that was too local or topical in interest to stand reproduction, and—especially the elder, which is out of print—some that I would sooner bury than perpetuate. The rest I have overhauled, and included in this recollection.

Readers in, or of, India have been kind enough to regard my previous efforts with favour. I hope that this little volume will find them no less benevolently disposed, and that at the same time it may not be without interest to those whose knowledge of the Shiny East is derived from hearsay.



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NOCTURNE WRITTEN IN AN INDIAN GARDEN

‘Where ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise.'

THE time-gun rolls his nerve-destroying bray ;
The toiling moon rides slowly o'er the trees ;
The weary diners cast their cares away,
And seek the lawn for coolness and for ease.

Now spreads the gathering stillness like a pall,
And melancholy silence rules the scene,
Save where the bugler sounds his homing call,
And thirsty THOMAS leaves the wet canteen ;

Save that from yonder lines in deepest gloom
Th' ambiguous mule does of the stick¹ bewail,
Whose *dunder* craft forbids him to consume
His proper blanket, or his neighbour's tail.

¹ The *dunder-stick*—an ingenious instrument devised to defeat this extraordinary appetite.

Beneath those jagged tiles, that low-built roof
(Whose inmost secret deeps let none divine!),
Each to his master's cry supremely proof,
The Aryan Brothers of our household dine.

Let not Presumption mock their joyless pile,—
The cold boiled rice, in native butter greased ;
Nor scorn, with rising gorge and painful smile,
The cheap but filling flapjacks of the East.

Full many a gem of highest Art-cuisine
Those dark unfathomed dogmatists eschew ;
Full many a 'dish to set before the Queen'
Would waste its sweetness on the mild Hindoo.

Nor you, their lords, expect of these the toil,
When o'er their minds a soft oblivion steals,
And through the long-drawn hookah's pliant coil
They soothe their senses, and digest their meals.

For Knowledge to their ears her ample store,
Rich with the latest news, does then impart,
Whose source, when known, shall chill you to
the core,
And freeze the genial cockles of the heart.

For once, to dumb Neglectfulness a prey,
Resentment led me undetected near,
To know the reason of this cool delay,
And teach my trusty pluralist to hear.

There to my vassals' ruminating throng
Some total stranger, seated on a pail,
Perused, translating as he went along,
My private letters by the current mail.

One moment, horror baulked my strong intent;
Next o'er the compound wall we saw him go,
While uncouth moan, with hapless gesture blent,
Deplored the pressing tribute of the toe.

THE MORAL

To you, fresh youths, with round unblushing
cheeks,
Some moral tag this closing verse applies;
E'en from the old the voice of Wisdom speaks—
Even the youngest are not always wise !

No further seek to probe the Best Unknown,
From Exploration's curious arts refrain ;
Lest Melancholy mark you for her own,
And you should learn—nor ever smile again.

TO HIS PECULIAR FRIEND
WITHIN-DOORS

After R. H.

A STRONG discomfort in the dress
Dwindling the clothes to nothingness
Saving, for due decorum placed,
A huckaback about the waist,
Or wanton towel-et, whose touch
Haply may spare to chafe o'ermuch :
A languid frame, from head to feet
Prankt in the arduous prickle-heat :
An erring fly, that here and there
Enwraths the crimsoned sufferèr :
An upward toe, whose skill enjoys
The slipper's curious equipoise :
A punkah wantoning, whereby
Papers do flow confoundedly :
By such comportment, and th' offence
Of thy fantastic eloquence,
Dost thou, my WILLIAM, make it known
That thou art warm, and best alone.

VALEDICTION

TO THE SS. 'ARABIA,' WHEN RETURNING WITH
HER PASSENGERS FROM THE DELHI DURBAR

Now the busy screw is churning,
Now the horrid sirens blow ;
Now are India's guests returning
Home from India's Greatest Show ;
Now the gleeful Asiatic
Speeds them on their wild career,
And, though normally phlegmatic,
Gives a half-unconscious cheer.

India's years were years of leanness,
Till the Late Performance drew
These, whose confidential greenness
She has run for all she knew.
Gladly rose the land to bid them
Welcome for a fleeting spell—
Nobly took them in and did them—
And has done extremely well.

Peace be theirs, important Packet,
Genial skies and happy calms—
No derogatory racket,
No humiliating qualms !
Gales, I charge you, shun to rouse and
Lash the seas to angry foam,
While Britannia's Great Ten Thousand
Sweep, with huge enjoyment, home !

Let the spiced and salty zephyr
Build them up in frame and mind,
Till they feel as fresh and effervescent
as their hearts are kind,
And in triumph close their Indian
Tour on far Massilia's quay,
Never having known too windy an
Offing, too disturbed a sea.

So, when English snows are falling,
When the fogs are growing dense,
They shall hear the East a-calling,
And shall come, and blow expense.
Every year shall bring his Argo ;
Every year a grateful East
Shall receive her golden Cargo,
And restore the Gilded—Fleeced !

A SOLDIER OF WEIGHT

IN the dim and distant ages, in the half-forgotten days,
Ere the East became the fashion and an Indian tour the craze,
Lived a certain Major-General, renowned throughout the State
As a soldier of distinction and considerable weight.

But though weightiness of mind is an invaluable trait,
When applied to adiposity it's all the other way;
And our hero was confronted with an ever-growing lack
Of the necessary charger and the hygienic hack.

He had bought them by the dozen, he had tried
them by the score,
But not one of them was equal to the burden
that he bore;
They were conscious of the honour, they were
sound in wind and limb,
They could carry a cathedral, but they drew the
line at *him*.

But he stuck to it, till finally his pressing needs
were filled
By the mammoth of his species, a Leviathan in
build,
A superb upstanding brown, of unexceptionable
bone,
And phenomenally qualified to carry twenty
stone.

And the General was happy; for the noble
creature showed
An unruffled acquiescence with the nature of his
load;

Till without the slightest warning, that superb
upstanding brown
Thought it time to make a protest, which he did
by lying down.

They appealed to him, reproached him, gave him
sugar, cut his feed,
But in vain; for almost daily that inexorable
steed,
When he heard his master coming, looked insult-
ingly around,
And with cool deliberation laid him down upon
the ground.

But they fought it out between them, till the
undefeated brute
Made a humorous obeisance at the General
Salute !
Then his owner kicked him wildly in the
stomach for his pranks,
Said he'd stand the beast no longer, and re-
turned him to the ranks.

(An interval of about three years.)

Time has dulled our hero's anguish ; time has
raised our man of weight

To an even higher office in the service of the State ;
And we find him at his yearly tour, inspecting
at his ease

A distinguished corps of cavalry, the Someone's
Own D. G.'s.

And our fat but famous man of war, accoutred
to the nines,

Was engaged in making rude remarks, and going
round the lines,

When he suddenly beheld across an intervening
space

A Leviathan of horseflesh, the Behemoth of his
race.

‘Colonel Robinson,’ he shouted, with enthusiastic
force,

‘A remarkably fine horse, sir !’ The remarkably
fine horse

Gave a reminiscent shudder, looked insultingly
around,

And with cold deliberation laid him down upon
the ground !

ODE TO THE TIME-GUN OF GURRUMBAD

[Time-guns are of invariable pattern and extreme antiquity. Other species come and go ; their ancestor remains always. One is to be found in each cantonment : he generally occupies a position of unsheltered and pathetic loneliness in a corner of the local parade-ground. The writer has never seen one herded in the Gun-park with his kind.]

STRONG scion of the sturdy past
When simpler methods ruled the fray,
At whose demoralising blast
The stoutest foe recoiled aghast,
How fall'n art thou to-day !

Thy power the little children mock ;
Thy voice, that shook the serried line,
But supplements the morning cock
At—roughly speaking—one o'clock,
And—broadly—half-past nine.

(Saving when THOMAS' deep employ
Th' attendant closing hour postpones,
And he, the undefeated boy,
To gain a temporary joy,
Hath stuffed thee up with stones.)

Thy kindred of a mushroom 'Mark,'
Young guns, intolerably spruce,
Have cast thee from the social 'park' ;
Which, to their humbled patriarch,
Must be the very deuce.

Their little toils with leisure crowned,
They, in their turn, will seek the Vale
Of Rest that thou hast never found ;
What wonder if thy daily Round
Is very like a Wail ?

Yet many love thee. Though his clutch
Be heavy, Time doth still afford
That fine consolatory touch—
It hardly seems to go for much,
But cannot be ignored.

For him that braves the midday fare
Thou hast the immemorial task
Of booming forth at one—or there-
abouts—which saves the wear and tear
Of yelling out to ask.

So, when athwart the glooming flats
Thy hoarse, nocturnal whispers stray—
Much to the horror of the bats—
We're one day nearer home, and that's
A comfort, anyway !

Then courage ! Guns may come and go,
But him alone we hold divine
Whose task it is to let us know
The hours of one o'clock—or so—
And—roundly—half-past nine.

OMAR OUT OF DATE

BY A RENEGADE DISCIPLE

WAKE! for Reveillée scatters into flight
The flagging Rearguard of a ruined Night,
 And hark! the meagre Champion of the
 Roost
Has flung a matins to the Throne of Light.

Here, while the first beam smites the sullen Sky,
With silent feet Hajâm comes stealing nigh,
 Bearing the Brush, the Vessel, and the Blade,
 These sallow cheeks of mine to scarify.

How often, oh, how often have I sworn
Myself myself to shave th' ensuing Morn!
 And then—and then comes Guest-night,
 and Hajâm
Appears unbidden, and is gladly borne.

Come, fill the Cup ! The nerve-restoring Ti
Shall woo me with the Leaf of far Bohi ;

What matter that to some the Koko makes
Appeal, to some the Cingalese Kofi ?

For in a minute Toil, that ever thrives,
Awaits me with her Shackles and her Gyves,

And ever crieth Folly in the streets :
'To work ! for needs ye must when Shaitân
drives.'

Alas ! that I did yesternight disport
With certain fellows of the baser Sort,

Unheedful of the living consequence
When Drinks are long, and Pockets all too
short !

With them the game of Poka did I play,
And in wild session turned the Night to Day ;

And many a Chip I dropped upon the
Board,
And many a Moistener poured upon the Clay.

I put my Pile against th' Improbable,
 And with a Full Hand thought to make it swell;
 And this was all the Profit that I reaped :
 A Full of Kings is Heaven—and Fours are Hell!

Then to the Mountain Dew I turned to seek
 New courage for the Vengeance I should wreak ;
 And once again came Fours, again the Flesh
 Was willing, and the Spirits far from weak.

*O Friend of pseudo-philosophic Calm,
 Who found within the Cup a life's Aram,
 Thy counsel, howsoever fair to read,
 Were passing bad to follow, friend Khayyam !*

*Was it not Suleiman the Wise that said :
 Look not upon the Wine when it is red ?
 And Suleiman the Wise knew What was
 Which,
 Though that great Heart of his outmatched his
 Head !*

Ah! with the Pledge a Door of Refuge ope
To wean my footsteps from the facile Slope,

And write me down, fulfilled of Self-esteem,
A Prop and Pillar of the Band of Hope;

That in the Club, should whilom Comrades try
To lure me to a Roister on the sly,

The necessary Zeal I may not lack
To turn away, nor wink the Other Eye!

ODE

ON A DISTANT PROSPECT OF EVER GETTING
TO THE HILLS*After T. G.*

YE distant Hills, ye smiling glades,
In decent foliage drest,
Where green Sylvanus proudly shades
The Sirkar's haughty crest,
And ye, that in your wider reign
Like bold adventurers disdain
The limit set for common clay,
Whose luck, whose pen, whose power of song,
Distinguish from the vulgar throng
To walk the flowery way :

Ah happy Hills ! Ah genial sky !
Ah Goal where all would end !
Where once, and only once, did I
Go largely on the bend ;

E'en now the tales that from ye flow
A fragmentary bliss bestow,

Till, once again a doedal boy,
In dreaming dimly of the first
I seem to take a second burst,
And snatch a tearful joy.

But tell me, Jakko, dost thou see
The same old sprightly crew
Disport with unembarrassed glee,
As we were wont to do?
What youth, in brazen armour cased,
With pliant arm the yielding waist
To arduous dalliance ensnares?
Who, foremost of his peers, exalts
The labours of the devious waltz
By sitting out the squares?

Does Prudence, gentle Matron, force
On Folly in her 'teens
The value of a stalking-horse
When hunting Rank and Means?
And is the Summer Widow's mind
Aggrieved and horrified to find
That, as her male acquaintance grows,

Her female circle pass her by
With Innuendo's outraged eye,
And Virtue's injured nose?

Lo, in the Vale of Tears beneath
A grilling troop is seen
Whom Failure gnaws with rankling teeth,
While Envy turns them green.
This racks the head, that scars the pelt,
These bore beneath the ample belt,
Those in the deeper vitals burn :
Lo, Want of Leave, to fill the cup,
Hath drunken all our juices up,
And topped the whole concern.

To each his billet ; some succeed,
And some are left to groan ;
The latter serve their country's need,
The former serve their own.
Then let the maiden try her wing,
The youth enjoy his roomy fling,
The Single Matron dry her eyes !
As Fate is blind, and Life is short,
If Ignorance can give them sport,
'Twere folly to be wise.

A SOMBRE RETROSPECT

LONG, long ago, in that heroic time
When I, a coy and modest youth, was shot
Out on this dust-heap of careers and crime
To try and learn what's what,

I had a servitor, a swarthy knave,
Who showed an almost irreligious taste
For wearing nothing but a turban, save
A rag about the waist.

This apparition gave me such a start,
That I endowed him with a cast-off pair
Of inexpressibles, and said, 'Depart,
And be no longer bare.'

He took the offering with broken thanks ;
But day succeeded day, and still revealed
Those sombre and attenuated shanks
Intensely unconcealed ;

Until at last the climax came when I
Resolved to bring this matter to an end,
And when I saw him passing, shouted, ' Hi!
Where are your trousers, friend ? '

Halting, he gave a deferential bow ;
Then, to my horror, beamingly replied,
' Master not see ? I wearing trousers *now* ! '
I would have said he lied,

But could not. As I shaped the glowing phrase,
I looked upon his turban—looked again—
Mine own familiar pattern met my gaze,
And all the truth was plain !

Th' unhappy creature, Eastern to the core,
Holding my gift in superstitious dread,
Had made a turban out of it, and wore
His trousers—*on his head* !

TO MANDALAY—GREETING

(BY WALTYARD WHIPMING)

I

A SONG of Mandalay !
Allons, Camerados, Desperadoes, Amontillados !
Hear my Recitative, my Romanza, my Spring
Onion !

II

You three-striped sergeants, you corporals, non-
commissioned officers, and men with one
or more good-conduct badges,
You indifferent and bad characters, am I not
also one with you ?
And will you not then hear my song ?
This for prelude.

III

You, O Mandalay, I sing !
For I see the pagoda, the Moulmein and
essentially wotto pagoda,

And the pagoda is above the trees,
But the trees are below the pagoda.

IV

I see the flying-fish sitting on the branches, I
hear them sing, and they fly and mate and
build their nests in the branches ;
I see a dun-coloured aboriginal she-female,
mongolianée, petite, squat-faced,
And she has a cast in her sinister optic and a
snub nose but her heart is true ;
And I gaze into her heart (which is true), and
I find that she is musing (as indeed I often
muse) on ME,
Me Prononcé, Me Imperturbe, Me Inconscion-
abilamente.

V

I see [*a page or so unavoidably omitted for lack of space,—refer to guide-book*] and . . . the wind, and the palm-trees idly swaying to and fro in the wind (now to, now fro), and I hear the bells of a temple, and I know that they are singing, and what it is that they would say.

VI

What is it that they would say do you ask Me?

VII

How shall I tell you, how shall I make you understand?

For I know that you do not love Me, you do not comprehend Me, you say that this sort of thing does you harm;

But I will even now do my darndest (as indeed I always do more or less), and if you do not like it,

Waal, Soldados?

VIII

Behold, I will write it as a song and put it in italics, so that even *you* will know that it *is* a song;

So listen, listen, Camerados! for I am about to spout and my song shall be masculine and virile. *A bas* your metre, *à la lanterne* your rhyme, *conspuez* your punctuation,

I say pooh-pooh!

SONG OF BELLS

*Allons ! Allons ! Tra-la-la ! Hear my Bellata !
Why do you not return to Mandalay O soldier ?
Do you not remember the boats, and the paddles as
they chunked outside the boats ?
Do you not remember the elephants, the mighty
elephants, strong, mysterious, impalpable (no,
not impalpable), pachydermatous, and the ex-
traordinary accuracy with which they succeeded
in balancing trees or parts of trees, branches,
logs, beams, planks, . . . etc., . . . with their
trunks (the beams carefully supported at their
centre of gravity, the logs carefully supported
at their centre of gravity, the elephants without
a smile at their centre of gravity)
From Rangoon to Mandalay ?*

For—

*On the road to Mandalay the flying-fishes play,
But there are no omnibuses to ply.*

*Is there not a thirst here, and are there any ten
commandments?*

*O you commandments! you first, second, third . . .
and tenth commandments! What has Man-
dalay to do with you, and what have you to
do with Mandalay?*

Ha! What is that?

*Is it a sound, is it the thunder, the sudden thunder,
strepitant, tonant?*

Is it the midday (twelve o'clock) cannon?

No!

Is it not then the ocean, the storm of the ocean?

Divil a bit!

*Return, return then O soldiers,
Return, you that have been discharged with*

pensions, as time-expired men, or as incorrigible and worthless,
Return, for it is the dawn, and it is calling to you as it comes up from China,
Though why from China do you ask me ?
Then ask me another !

A BALLAD OF BUTTONRY

Clothes and the Man I sing. Reformers, note
These of the Subaltern who owned a Coat.

He was what veterans miscall, for short,
By that objectionable term, a wart :¹

The Coat an item of the 'sealed' attire
Wrung from his helpless but reluctant sire ;

Also the tails were long ; and, for the pride
Thereof, were buttons on the after-side ;

Majestic orbs, whose gilded obverse bore
The bossy symbol of his future corps.

The youth, ere sailing for a distant land,
Did, in the interval, receive command

¹ A last-joined young officer.—*Military Definitions.*

To join a 'Course,' where men of grave repute
Instruct the young idea how to shoot.

Thither he sped, and on the opening day
Rose, and, empanoplied in brave array,

(Ample of flowing skirt, and with great craft
And pomp of blazoned buttonry abaft)

Won to the mess, and preened his fledgling
plumes

Both in the breakfast- and the ante-rooms.

Awhile he moved in rapture, and awhile
Thrilled in the old, inevitable style

To that stern joy which youthful warriors feel
In wearing garments worthy of their zeal;

Then came the seneschal upon the scenes,
And knocked his infant pride to smithereens.

For out, alack ! the Fathers of the mess
Strictly prohibited that form of dress,

Being by sad experience led to find
Disaster in the buttonry behind,

Which tore and scratched the leather-cushioned
chairs,
And cost a perfect fortune in repairs !

It was a crushing blow. That Subaltern
Discovered that he had a lot to learn ;

Removed his Coat, and laid it, weeping, in
Its long sarcophagus of beaten tin :

Buried it deep, and drew it thence no more ;
Finished his Course, and sought an alien shore.

So runs the tale. I had it from the youth
Himself, and I suppose he told the truth.

(The words alone are mine ; I need but hint
That his were too emotional for print.)

And as in India, though the chairs are hard,
His Coat—delicious irony—is barred ;

Being designed for cooler zones, and not
For one inadequately known as 'hot';

And, furthermore, as bold Sir Fashion brings
Changes, yea, even to the soldier's things:

He questions if the Coat were worth the price,
Seeing that he will hardly wear it twice.

THE IRON HAND

‘The Government of India *has been pleased* to sanction the infliction of a fine of . . ., etc.’

To him that reads with careless eyes
My present theme affords
But little scope for enterprise
In buttering one’s lords :
Fines, he would urge, have always bulked
Largely to Those that rule,
For, plainly, every man They mulct
Contributes to the pool.

But when in ages dead and gone
Our fathers fought with Sin,
However hard they laid it on,
They didn’t rub it in ;

While These not only bring to bear
Their dark prerogatives,
But diabolically air
The pleasure that it gives !

Here is the Iron Hand that builds
Our realms beyond the sea ;
No *suaviter in modo* gilds
Their *fortiter in re* ;
Here is no washy velvet glove
To pad the Fist of Fear—
None of your guiding charms of Love—
None of your hogwash here !

No. From Their thrones amid the stars
They glower athwart the land
Implacable, with 'eye like Mars
To threaten and command.'
Too cold, too truculent, to stay
The awful bolt They fling,
They make no bones about it—They
Are *pleased* to do this thing !

Blind to the victim's mask of woe,
Deaf to his poignant howls,
No pity stirs Their bosoms, no
Reluctance wrings Their bow'ls !
By prompt and ready cash alone
Their wrath shall be appeased
Who pile it on like gods, and own,
Like men, to being pleased.

THE WOOIN' O' TUMMAS

After R. B.

TUMMAS KATT cam' roun' to woo,
 Ha, ha, the wooin' o't ;
Lichtly sang ta lang nicht thro',
 Ha, ha, the mewin' o't ;
Tabbie, winsome, tim'rous beast,
Speakit : ' Tummas, haud tha' weist !
Girt auld Tummas 'gan inseest ;
 Ha, ha, the doin' o't !

Tabbie laucht, an' brawly fleired,
 Ha, ha, the fleirin' o't ;
Tummas,—ech ! but Tummas speired
 Ha, ha, the speirin' o't ;
Sic an awesome, fearfu' screep,
Wakin' a' aroun' frae sleep ;
Fegs, it gar'd the Gudeman weep !
 Ha, ha, the hearin' o't !

Quoth the Gudeman : 'Dairm his een ! '

Ha, ha, the swearin' o't ;

'Muckle fasht was I yestreen,

A' thro' the bearin' o't !

Ere the sonsie moon was bricht,

Clean awa' till mornin' licht,

Mickle sleep was mine the nicht ;

Ha, ha, the wearin' o't ! '

'Where are noo ma booties twa ?

Ha, ha, the stoppin' o't ;

'Tis mysel' shall gar him fa' ;

Ha, ha, the coppin' o't !

'Gin a bootie, strang an' stoot,

Sneikit Tummas roun' ta snoot,

Winna Tummas gang frae oot ?

Ha, ha, the droppin' o't ! '

Swuft the pawky booties came,

Ha, ha, the flittin' o't :

Tummas scraught, an' lit for hame,

Ha, ha, the spittin' o't ;

Lauchit Tabbs to see him fa' ;
Leapit frae ta gairden wa' ;
Quoth the Gudeman : ' Dairm it a' !
What price the hittin' o't ? '

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

CHRISTMAS comes but once a year.
Though by nature snappy,
Let us, as we may, appear
Merry, friend, and happy !
Buckle to ; and when you meet your
Thunderstricken fellow-creature,
Show the broad, indulgent smile
Of th' ingenuous crocodile !
Look as if you 'd backed a winner !
Laugh, you miserable sinner !

Brother, Christmas Day has come.
Can't you seek for inspira-
tion in the turkey, plum-
pudding, beef, and *mince-pie* ?
Brave it out, and tho' you sit on
Tenterhooks, remain a Briton ;

You can only do your best;
Boxing Day's a day of rest!
Throw aside your small digestive
Eccentricities. Be festive!

Christmas Day is on the wing.
Are you feeling wroth with
Any one for anything?
Beg his pardon *forthwith*!
Though the right is all on *your* side,
Say it isn't; say 'Of course I'd
No intention—very rude—
Shocking taste—but misconstrued'—
Then (while I admit it's horri-
fying) tell the man you're sorry!

Christmas Day will soon have flown.
If, despite persuasion,
You resolve to be alone
On the glad occasion,
Better (do as I have done!)
Vanish with a scatter-gun;

If you have to see it through,
(Better do what I shall do !)
Dining quietly at the Club 'll
Save us from a world of trouble !

‘KAL!’

(=TO-MORROW)

[‘Never do To-day what can be postponed till To-morrow, save at the dictates of your personal convenience.’—*Maxims of the Wicked*, No. 3.]

SWEET Word, by whose unwearying assistance
We of the Ruling Race, when sorely tried,
Can keep intrusive persons at a distance,
And let unseasonable matters slide ;
Thou at whose blast the powers of irritation
Yield to a soft and gentlemanly lull
Of solid peace and flat Procrastination,
These to thy praise and honour, good old Kal !

For we are greatly plagued by sacrilegious
Monsters in human form, who care for naught
Save with incessant papers to besiege us,
E’en to the solemn hour of silent thought ;

They draw no line ; the frightful joy of
giving

Pain is their guerdon ; but for Thee alone,
Life would be hardly worth the bore of
living,

No one could call his very soul his own.

But in thy Name th' importunate besetter
Meets a repelling force that none can
stem ;
Varlets may come (they do) and go (they 'd
better !),
Kal is the word that always does for them !
To-morrow they may join the usual muster ;
To-day shall pass inviolably by ;
BEELZEBUB Himself, for all his bluster,
Would get the same old sickening reply.

And, for thine aid in baffling the malignant,
Who, with unholy art, conspire to see
Our ease dis-eased, our dignity indignant,
We do Thee homage on the bended knee.

And I would add a word of common gratitude
To those thy coadjutors, *ao* and *lao*,¹
Who take, with Thee, th’ uncompromising attitude
From which the dullest mind deduces *jao*.

¹ *Kal-ao*=‘return to-morrow’; *kal-lao*=‘bring it back to-morrow.’ Each of these phrases is the euphemistic equivalent of *jao*, that is, ‘go away, (and stay there).’

TO AN ELEPHANT

ON HIS TONIC QUALITIES

SOLACE of mine hours of anguish,
Peace-imparting View, when I,
Sick of Hindo-Sturm-und-Drang, wish
I could lay me down and die,

Very present help in trouble,
Never-failing anodyne
For the blows that knock us double,
Here's towards thee, Hathi mine !

As, 'tis said, the dolorous Jack Tar
Turns to view the watery Vast,
When he mourns his frail charac-tar,
Or deplores his jagged Past,

Climbs a cliff, and breathes his sighs on
That appalling breast until,
Borne from off the far horizon,
Voices whisper, 'Cheer up, Bill!'

So when evil chance or dark as-
persions crush the bosom's lord,
When discomfort rends the car-cass,
When we're sorry, sick, or bored,

When the year is at its hottest,
And our life with sorrow crowned,
Gazing thee-wards, where thou blottest
Out the landscape, pulls us round,

Gives us peace, some nameless modi-
cum of cheer to mind and eye:
Something that can soothe a body
Like a blessed lullaby.

Sweet it is to watch thee, Hathi,
Through the stertorous afternoons,
Wond'ring why so stout a party
Wears such baggy pantaloons :

Sweet, again, to steal a-nigh and
 Watch thee, ere thy meals begin,
Deftly weigh th' unleavened viand,
 Lest thou be deceived therein :

Sweet to mark thee gravely dining :
 Grand, when day has nearly gone,
'Tis to view yon Orb declining
 Down behind thee, broadside on :

Ay ! and when thy vassals tub thee,
 And thou writhest 'neath the brick
Wherewithal they take and scrub thee,
 'Twere a sight to heal the sick !

Not a pose but serves to ward off
 Pangs that had of yore prevailed ;
E'en the stab of being scored off
 Owns the charm, old Double-Tailed !

But, O Thou that giv'st the flabby
 Strength, and stingo'st up the weak :—
Restful as a grand old Abbey—
 Bracing as a Mountain Peak :—

All the bonds of Age were slackened,
And my years were out of sight,
When I burst upon thy back end
As thou kneeled'st yesternight!

Head and frame were hidden. Only
Loomed a black, colossal Seat,
Taut, magnificent, and lonely,
O'er a pair of suppliant feet

To th' astounded mind conveying
Dreams from which my manhood shrank,
Of a very fat man praying,
Whom a boy would love to spank.

And I felt my fingers twitching,
And my sinews turned to wire,
And my palm was itching, itching,
With the old, unhallowed fire.

While the twofold voice within me
Urged their long-forgotten feud,
One to do thee shame would win me,—
One that whispered, 'Don't be rude!'

Till, by heaven ! thy pleading beauty
Drove those carnal thoughts away,
And the friend that came to scruti-
nise was left behind to pray :—

For I shamed thee not, nor spanked thee ;
But to rearward, on the plain,
Hathi, on my knees I thanked thee
That I felt a boy again !

VISIONARY

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF AN ' ASTRAL BODY '

IT is told, in Buddhi-theosophic Schools
There are rules
By observing which when mundane matter irks,
Or the world has gone amiss, you
Can incontinently issue
From the circumscribing tissue
Of your Works.

That the body and the gentleman inside
Can divide,
And the latter, if acquainted with the plan,
Can alleviate the tension
By remaining ' in suspension '
As a kind of fourth dimension
Bogie man.

And to such as mourn an Indian Solar Crime
At its prime,
'Twere a stratagem so luminously fit,
That tho' doctrinaires deny it,
And Academicians guy it,
I, for one, would like to try it
For a bit.

Just to leave one's earthly tenement asleep
In a heap,
And detachedly to watch it as it lies,
With an epidermis pickled
Where the prickly heat has prickled,
And a sense of being tickled
By the flies.

And to sit and loaf and idle till the day
Dies away,
In a duplicate ethereally cool,
Or around the place to potter,
(Tho' the flesh could hardly totter,)
As contented as an otter
In a pool!

' Let the pestilent mosquito do his worst
Till he burst,
Let him bore and burrow, morning, noon, and
night,
If he finds the diet sweet, oh,
Who am *I* to place a veto
On the pestilent mosquito?—
Let him bite!'

O my cumbersome misfit of bone and skin,
Could I win
To the wisdom that would render me exempt
From the grosser bonds that tether
You and Astral Me together,
I should simply treat the weather
With contempt;

I should contemplate its horrors with entire
Lack of ire,
And pursuant to my comfortable aim,
With a snap at every shackle
I should quit my tabernacle,
And serenely sit and cackle
At the game!

But, alas ! the 'mystic glory swims away,'
 And the clay
Is as vulgarly persistent as of yore,
 And the cuticle is pickled
Where the prickly heat has prickled,
 And the nose and ears are tickled
 As before ;

And until the Buddhi-theosophic Schools
 Print the rules
That will bring our tale of sorrows to a close,
 Body mine, though others chide thee,
 And consistently deride thee,
 I shall have to stay inside thee,
 I suppose !

SUMMER PORTENTS

COME, let us quaff the brimming cup
Of sorrow, bitterness, and pain ;
For clearly, things are warming up
Again.

Observe with what awakened powers
The vulgar Sun resumes the right
Of rising in the hallowed hours
Of night.

Bound to the village water-wheel,
The motive bullock bows his crest,
And signals forth a mute appeal
For rest.

His neck is galled beneath the yoke :
His patient eyes are very dim :
Life is a dismal sort of joke
To *him*.

Yet one there is, to whom the ox
Is kin ; who knows, as habitat,
The cold, unsympathetic box,
Or mat ;

Who urges on, with wearied arms,
The punkah's rhythmic, laboured sweep,
Nor dares to contemplate the charms
Of sleep.

Now 'mid a host of lesser things
That pasture through the heaving nights,
The sharp mosquito flaps his wings,
And bites ;

With other Anthropophagi,
Such as that microscopic brand
The common Sand-fly (or the fly
Of sand),

Who, with a hideous lust uncurbed
By clappings of the frequent palm,
Devours one's ankles, undisturbed,
And calm.

The scorpion nips one unaware :
The lizard flops upon the head :
And cobras, uninvited, share
One's bed.

Oh, if I only had the luck
To feel the grand Olympic fire
That thrilled the Greater when they struck
The lyre !

When Homer wrote of this and that :
When Dante sang like one possessed :
When Milton groaned and laboured at
His Best !

Had I the swelling rise and fall,
Whereof the Bo'sun's quivering moan
Derives a breezy fragrance all
Its own :

Oh, I would pour such passion out—
Good gracious me !—I would so sing
That you should know the *facts* about
This thing !

Then w-w-wake, my Lyre! O halting lilt!
O miserable, broken lay!
It may not be: I am not built
That way.

Yet other gifts the gods bestow.
I do not weep, I do not grieve.
Far from it. I shall simply go
On leave.

ELYSIUM

FROM the dust, and the drought, and the
heat,

I am borne on the pinions of leave,
From the things that are bad to repeat
To the things that are good to receive.

From the glare of the day at its height
On a land that was blinding to see,
From the wearisome hiss of the night,
By a turn of the wheel I am free.

I have passed to the heart of the Hills,
For a season of halcyon hours,
'Mid the music of murmurous rills,
And the delicate odours of flowers;

And I walk in an exquisite shade,
Where the fern-tasselled boughs interlace ;
And the verdurous fringe of the glade
Is a marvel of fairylike grace ;

And with never an aim or a plan
I can wander in uttermost ease,
Where the only reminders of Man
Are the monkeys aloft in the trees ;

Or, perchance, on the ' silvery mere,'
In a ' shallop ' I lazily float,
With—it 's possible—some one to steer,
Or with no one (which lightens the boat).

O the glorious gift of release
From the chains that encircle the thrall,
To be quiet, and cool, and at peace,
And to loaf, and do nothing at all !

I am clear of that infamous lark ;
I am far from the blare of the Band ;
And the bugles are silent, the bark
Of the Colonel is hushed in the land.

And—I say it again—I am free,
In the valleys of wandering bliss ;
And most gratefully ‘own, if there *be*
An Elysium on earth, it is this !’

TO MY LADY OF THE HILLS

‘. . . O she,
To me myself, for some three careless moons,
The summer pilot of an empty heart
Unto the shores of Nothing.’—Tennyson.

‘TIS the hour when golden slumbers
Through th’ Hesperian portals creep,
And the youth who lisps in numbers
Dreams of novel rhymes to ‘sleep’;
I shall merely note, at starting,
That responsive Nature thrills
To the *twilight* hour of parting
From my Lady of the Hills.

Lady, ‘neath the deepening umbrage
We have wandered near and far,
To the ludicrously dumb rage
Of your truculent Mamma;

We have urged the long-tailed gallop ;
Lightly danced the still night through ;
Smacked the ball, and oared the shallop
(In a vis-à-vis canoe) ;

We have walked this fair Oasis,
Keeping, more by skill than chance,
To the non-committal basis
Of indefinite romance ;
Till, as love within me ripened,
I have wept the hours away,
Brooding on my meagre stipend,
Mourning mine exiguous pay.

Dear, 'tis hard, indeed, to stifle
Fervour such as mine has grown,
And I'd freely give a trifle
Could I win you for mine own ;
But the question simply narrows
Down to one persistent fact,
That we cannot say we're sparrows,
And we oughtn't so to act.

Married bliss is born of incomes ;
While to drag the long years through
Till some hypothetic tin comes,
Seems a childish thing to do ;
Rather let us own as lasting
Our unpardonable crime,
Giving thanks, with prayer and fasting,
For so very high a time.

Fare you well. Your dreadful Mother,
If I know that woman's mind,
Has her eye upon Another
Vice me, my dear, resigned ;
And I see you mated shortly
To some covenanted swain,
Not objectionably portly,
Not prohibitively plain.

Take his gifts, and ask a blessing.
Meddle not with minor cares.
Trust me, your unprepossessing
Dam soon settles those affairs !

Then will I, with honeyed suasion,
Pinch some thriftless man of bills
Of a mark of the occasion
For my Lady of the Hills.

THE SHORES OF NOTHING

THERE 's a little lake that lies
In a valley, where the skies
Kiss the mountains, as they rise,
 On the crown ;
And the heaven-born élite
Are accustomed to retreat
From the pestilential heat
 Lower down.

Where the Mighty, for a space,
Mix with Beauty, Rank, and Grace,
(I myself was in the place,
 At my best !)
And the atmosphere 's divine,
While the deodar and pine
Are particularly fine
 For the chest.

And a little month ago,
When the sun was lying low,
And the water lay aglow
 Like a pearl,
I, remarkably arrayed,
Dipped an unobtrusive blade
In the lake—and in the shade—
 With a girl.

O 'twas pleasant thus to glide
On the 'softly-flowing tide'
(Which it 's not !) and, undescribed,
 Take a hand
In the sweet, idyllic sports
That are known in such resorts,
To the sympathetic snorts
 Of the Band.

Till, when o'er the 'still lagoon'
Passed the golden afternoon,
The preposterous bassoon,
 Growling deep,

Saved the King and knelled the day
As the crimson changed to grey
And the little valley lay
Half asleep.

It is finished. She was kind.
'Out of sight is out of mind.'
But the taste remains behind,
(And the bills,)
And I'd give the world to know
If there's some one else in tow
With my love (a month ago)
In the Hills!

O ye valleys, tell me, pray,
Was she on the lake to-day ?
Does she foot it in the gay,
Social whirl ?
O ye Mountains of Gilboa,
Send a bird, or kindly blow a
Breeze to tell me all you know a-
bout that girl !

THE LAST HOCKEY

After A. T.

SO for the last great Hockey of the Hills,
—Damsel *v.* Dame—by ruder cynics called
The Tournament of the Dead Dignities,
We gained the lists, and I, thro' humorous lens,
Perused the revels. Here on autumn grass
Leapt the lithe-elbowed Spin, and strongly
merged

In scrimmage with the comfortable Wife
And temporary Widow,—know you not,
Such trifles are the merest commonplace
In loftier contours?—Twenty-two in all
They numbered, and none other trod the field
Save one, the bold Sir Referee, whose charge
It was to keep fair order in the lists,
And peace 'twixt Dame and Damsel: married,
he.

O brothers, had ye seen them ! O the games !
Fleet-footed some : lightly they leapt, and drove
Or missed the pellet ; then, perchance, would
turn
With hand that sought their tresses. Others
moved
Careless, in half disdain, nor urged pursuit ;
Yet ever and anon would shriek, and miss
The pellet, while the bold Sir Referee
Skipt in avoidance. From the factions came
The cry of voices shrilling woman-wise,
The clash of stick on stick, the muffled shin,
The sudden whistle, and the murmurous note
Of mutual disaffection. Otherwhere
The myriad coolie chortled, knightly palms
Clapped, and the whole vale echoed to the
noise
Of ladies, who in session to the West
Sat with the light behind them, self-approved.

Fortune with equal favour poised the scale,
And louder rang the trouble, till I heard
' A Susan ! Ho ! A Susan ! '—She, oh she,

One whom myself had picked from out the crowd

Of hot girl-athletes with their tousled hair,
Was on the ball. Deftly she smote, and drove
On, and so paddled swiftly in its wake.

The good ash gleamed and fell ; the forward ranks

Gave passage ; once again she smote, again
Paddled, nor passed, but paddling ever neared
The mournful guardian of the Sacred Goal,
Hewing and hacking. Little need to tell
Of Susan in her glory ; whom she smote
She felled, and whom she shocked she overthrew ;
And, shrieking, passed exultant to her doom.

For Susan, while she clove a devious course,
Moved crab-like, in a strange diagonal,
And, driving, crossed the frontiers. Thither
came

The bold Sir Referee, and shrilled abroad
The tremulous, momentary ' touch.' But she,
Heaving with unaccustomed exercise,
Blinded and baffled, wild with all despair,
Stood sweeping, as a churl that sweeps the scythe

In earlier pastures. Twice he skipped, and
poured

The desperate whistle. Once again, and he,
Skipping, diffused the whistle. But at last,
So shrewd a blow she dealt him on the shin,
That had he stood reverse-wise on his head,
Not on his feet, I know not what had chanced.
Then to the shuddering Orient skies there rose
A marvellous great shriek, the splintering noise
Of shattered ash-plant and of battered shank,
Mixed with a higher. For Susan, overwrought,
Lost footing, and with one clear dolorous wail
Fell headlong, only more so. And I saw,
Clothed in black stockings, mystic, wonderful,
That which I saw. The coolies yelled. The
crowd

Closed round, and so the tourney reached an end.

Then home they bore the bold Sir Referee
In Susan's litter ; and they tended him
With curious tendance ; and they drowned his
views

On Susan, and the tourney, and the place
Whither he'd see them ere again he ruled

Such functions, with a sweet, small song (I call
It sweet that should not !). This is how it ran :—

‘ Our Referee has fall’n, has fall’n. The stick,
The little stick he leapt at in the lists
Has riven and cleft the bark, and raised a bulk
Of crescent span, that spreads on every side
A thousand hues, all flushing into one.

‘ Our Referee has fall’n, has fall’n. She came,
The woman with her ash, and lo the wound !
But we will make a bandage for the limb,
And swathe it, heel to knee, with splints and wool,
And embrocations for the hurts of man.’

‘ Our Referee has fall’n, has fall’n ; he wailed ;
With our own ears we heard him, and we knew
There dwelt an iron nature in the grain !
The splintering ash was cloven on his limb ;
His limb was battered to the cannon-bone.’

So passed that stout but choleric knight away ;
And we, by certain wandering instincts led,
Made for a small pavilion, where we found
Viands and what not, and the thirsty flower
Of mountain knighthood gathered at the board.
And entering, here we lingered, and discussed

The what not, and the viands, and in time
Drew to the tourney, giving each his views ;—
But mostly wondering what the coolies thought
To see these ladies of the Ruling Race,
'Yoked in all *exercise* of noble end,'
And Public Exhibition. Was it wise ?
Some questioned ; others, was it quite the thing ?

And here indeed we left it, for the shades
Deepened, the high, swift-narrowing crest of day
Broke from the hills, and down the path we went,
Well pleased, for it was guest-night at the Club.

‘FAREWELL’

‘FAREWELL. What a subject! How sweet
It looks to the careless observer!
So simple; so easy to treat
With tenderness, mark you, and fervour.

Farewell. It’s a poem; the song
Of nightingales crying and calling!
O Reader, you’re utterly wrong.
It’s not. It’s appalling!

And yet when she asked me to send
Some trifle of verse to remind her
Of days that had come to an end,
And one she was leaving behind her,
It looked, as we stood on the shore,
A theme so entirely delightsome
That I, like a lunatic, swore
(Quite calmly) to write some.

I 've toiled with unwavering pluck ;
I 've struggled if ever a man did ;
Infringed every postulate, stuck
At nothing,—nay, once, to be candid,
I shifted the cadence—designed
A fresh but unauthorised *fare-well* ;
'Twas plausible, too, but I find
The thing doesn't wear well.

I know that it shouldn't be hard ;
That dozens, who claim to be poets,
Could scribble off stuff by the yard
And fare very well ; and I know it 's
A theme that the Masters of Rhyme
Have written some excellent verse on,
Which proves, as I take it, that I 'm
Not that sort of person.

But that we can leave. It remains
To state that my present appearance
Is something too awful, my brains
Are tending to wild incoherence ;

My mental condition 's absurd ;

 My thoughts are at sixes and sevens,
Inextrica—lord ! what a word !

 Inextri—good heavens !

My dear, you can do what you like,—

 Forgive, or despise, or abuse me—
But frankly, I 'm going on strike,
 And really you 'll have to excuse me.
Indeed it 's my only resource,
 For, sure as I stuck to my promise, I 'd
Be booked in a week for a course
 Of *sui-cum-homicide*.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR

11.30 P.M., DEC. 31

FRIEND, when the year is on the wing,
'Tis held a fair and comely thing
 To turn reflective glances
Over the days' forbidden Scroll,
See if we 're better on the whole,
 And average our chances.

Yet 'tis an awful thing to drag
Each separate deed from out the bag
 That up till now has hidden 't,
And bring before the shuddering view
All that we swore we wouldn't do,
 Or should have done, but didn't.

The broken code, the baffled laws,
Our little private faults and flaws,
 And every naughty habit,

Come whistling through the Waste of Life,
Until one longs to take a knife,
 Feel for his heart, and stab it.

Unchanged, exultant, one and all
Rise up spontaneous to the call,
 And bring their stings behind them ;
But when the search is duly plied
For items on the credit side,
 One has a job to find them !

I know not *why* they change. I know—
None better—how one's feelings grow
 Distinctly kin to mutiny,
To see one's assets limping in,
All too preposterously thin
 To stand a moment's scrutiny.

I know that shock must follow shock,
Until the sole remaining Rock
 That all one's hopes exist on,
Crumbles beneath the crushing force
Of Conscience, kicking like a horse,
 And pounding like a piston.

Hardly a little year has past
Since you, I take it, swore to cast
 Aside the bonds that girt you,
And thought to stun the dazzled earth,
A pillared Miracle of Worth,
 Raised on a plinth of Virtue.

One always does. One wonders why.
One knows that, as the years go by,
 One finds the same old blunders,
The same old acts, the same old words ;
And as one trots them out in herds,
 Or one by one, one wonders ;

• • • •
Another year,—a touch of grey,—
A little stiffness,—day by day
We feel the need of, shall we say,
 Goggles to face the sun with,—
A little loss of youthful bloom,—
A little nearer to the Tomb !
(Pardon this momentary gloom)
 Bang go the bells. *That's done with !*

SAIREY

EXCERPTS FROM AN INCONGRUITY

After A. C. S.

IN Spring there are lashings of new books,
In Autumn fresh novels are sold,
They are many, but my shelf has few books,
My comrades, the favourites of old ;
Tho' the roll of the cata-logues vary,
Thou alone art unchangeably dear,
O bibulous, beautiful Sairey,
Our Lady of Cheer.

By the whites of thine eyes that were yellow,
By the folds of thy duplicate chin,
By thy voice that was husky but mellow
With gin, with the richness of gin,

By thy scorn of the boy that was Bragian,
By thy wealth of perambulate swoons,
O matchless and mystical Magian,
Beguile us with boons.

For thou scatterest the evil before us
With grave humours and exquisite speech,
Till we heed not the 'new men that *bore* us,'
Nor regard the new women that screech;
We are weak, but thy hand shall refresh us;
We are faint, but we know thee sublime;
More priceless than pills, and more precious
Than draughts that are slime.

Thou hast lifted us forth from the *melly*,
Thou hast told, with thick heavings of pride,
Of the Package in Jonadge's belly,
And the Camel that rich folks may ride;
From the mire and the murk of a stern Age
In the Font of St. Polge we are clean,
O Gold as has passed through the Furnage,
Our Lady and Queen.

In thy chamber where Holborn is highest,
At the banquet, ere night had begun,
Thou wert seated with her that was nighest
Thy heart, save the Only, the One ;
For the hours of thy labour were ended,
And the spirit of peace was within,
And the fumes from the teapot ascended
Of unsweetened gin.

Dost thou dream in dim dusk when light lingers,
Of Betsy, the bage, the despiged,
Who with snap of imperious fingers
Hariçina, thy figment, deniged ?
Dost thou gasp at the shock of the blow sich
As she, in her tantrum, let fall,
Who 'didn't believe there was no sich
A person' at all ?

Fear not ! Though the torters be frightful,
Though the words that thou took'st unawares
Be as serpiants that twine and are spiteful,
O thou best of good creeturs, who cares ?

For the curse hath recoiled, and the stigma
Thou hast turned to her sorrer and shame,
While thy cryptic and sombre Enigma
Is shrined in a Name.

• • • • •
And our wine shall not lack for thy throttle,
Nor at night shall our portals be clogged,
And thy lips thou shalt place to the bottle
On our chimley, when so thou'rt dispoged ;
We have pickled 'intensely' our salmon ;
To thy moods are great cowcumbers dressed,
O Daughter of Gumption and Gammon,
Our Mistress and Guest !

And in hours when our lamp-ile has dwindled
In deep walleys of uttermost pain,
When our hopes to grey ashes are kindled,
We are fain of thee still, we are fain ;
In this Piljian's Projiss of Woe, in
This Wale of white shadders and damp,
O Roge all a-blowin' and growin',
We open our Gamp !

ADAM

ADAM

After W. W.

An adventure of the Author's, and one designed to show that grievances may be met with in the cottages of the humblest, and may take the most unexpected forms.

WHEN in my white-washed walls confined
Till eve her freedom brings,
I often turn a musing mind
To think awhile of things,

And thus about the noontide glow
To-day my thoughts recalled
Old Adam, whom I once did know,
A dear old thing, though bald.

A village Gravedigger was he
With Newgate fringe of grey,
The only man that one could see
At work on Saturday !

For on those evenings (which provide
A due release to toil)
He shovelled wearily, and plied
His task upon the soil.

Therein a sorrow Adam had,
And when he knew me well
He told this tale, and made me sad,
Which now to you I tell.

For once my feet did chance to stray
Across the old churchyard,
And Adam sighed, and paused to say
'It's werry, werry hard.'

I marvelled much to hear him sigh,
And when he paused again,
'Come, come, you quaint old thing,' said I,
'Why thus this tone of pain ?'

In silence Adam rose, and gained
A seat amid the stones,
And thus the veteran complained,
The dear old bag of bones.

‘Down by the wall the Village goes,
How horrid sounds their glee,
On Saturdays they early close,
They have their Sundays free ;

‘ And here, on this depressing spot,
I cannot choose but moan
That I, a labouring man, have not
An hour to call my own.

‘ The Blacksmith in his Sunday things,
The Clerk that leaves his till,
Can give their thoughts of labour wings,
And frolic as they will.

‘ To me they—drat ‘em !—never give
A thought ; they wander by,
An irritation while they live,
A nuisance when they die.

‘ If there be one that needs lament
The way these folks behave,
'Tis he whose holidays are spent
In digging someone’s grave,

‘For when a person takes and dies,
On Monday though it be,
They *never* hold his obsequies
Till Sunday after three.

‘And thus it fares through their delay,
That I may not begin
To dig the grave till Saturday,—
On Sunday fill it in.

‘My Sabbath ease is broken through,
My Saturdays destroyed;
Many employ me; *very few*
Have left me unemployed!’

Again did Adam murmur ‘Drat!’
And smote the old-churchyard,
And said, as on his hands he spat,
‘It’s werry, werry hard! ’

And as I rose, the path to take
That led me home again,
My head was in my wideawake,
His words were in my brain.

ELEGY ON A RHINOCEROS

RECENTLY DECEASED

COME, let us weep for Begum ; he is dead.

Dead ; and afar, where Thamis' waters lave
The busy marge, he lies unvisited,

Unsung ; above no cypress branches wave,
Nor tributary blossoms fringe his grave ;
Only would these poor numbers advertise
His copious charms, and mourn for his demise.

Blithesome was he and beautiful ; the Zoo

Hath nought to match with Begum. He was
one

Of infinite humour ; well indeed he knew

To catch with mobile lips th' impetuous bun
Tossed him-ward by some sirc-encouraged son,
Half-fearful, yet of pride fulfilled to note
The dough, swift-homing down th' exultant
throat.

Whilom he pensive stood, infoliate
Of comfortable mud, and idly stirred
His tiny caudal, disproportionate
But not ungraceful, while a wanton herd
Of revellers the mystic lens preferred ;
Whereof the focus rightly they addrest ;
And, Phœbus being kind, the button prest.

Then, being frolic, he, as one distraught,
Would blindly, stumbling, seek the watery verge
And sink, nor rise again. But when, untaught
In craft, the mourners raised the untimely
dirge,
Lo ! otherwhere himself would swift emerge
Incontinent, and crisp his tasselled ears ;
And, all vivacious, own the sounding cheers.

Nothing of dark suspicion nor of guile
Was limned on Begum ; his the mirthful
glance,
The genial port, the comprehensive smile :—
The very sunbeams shimmering loved to dance
Within that honest, open countenance ;—

And far as eye could pierce, his roomy grin
Was pink, as 'twere Aurora dwelt therein.

Yet he is dead! Whether the froward cates
Some lawless lodgment found, nor coughs
released:
Or if adown those hospitable gates
Drove the strong North, or shrilled the raven-
ing East,
And, ill-requiting, slew the wretched beast,
We nothing know; only the news is cried,
Begum is dead: we know not how he died.

Still, though the callous bards neglect to hymn
Thy praises, Begum; though, on dross intent,
The hireling sculptor pauseth not to limn
Thy spacious visage, kindly hands are bent
E'en now to stuff thy frail integument.
Then sleep in peace, Belovèd; blest Sultân
Of some Rhinokeraunian Devachân.

IN SEVERAL KEYS

No. I

‘MARIE’

WE hear the opening refrain,
 Marie !
We thought so ; here you are again,
 Marie !
A simple tune, in simple thirds,
Beloved of after-dinner birds ;
A legend, self-condemned as ‘words,’
 Marie !

She lingers by the flowing tide,
 Marie ;
A ‘fisher-lad’ is close beside
 Marie ;
He gazes in her ‘eyes so blue’ ;
Marie, Marie, my heart is true ;
And then,—you do, you know you do,
 Marie !—

But vain is every mortal wish,
Marie ;
And 'fisher-lads' have got to fish,
Marie ;
O blinding tears ! O cheeks 'so' wet !
Marie, I come again ! And yet
I shouldn't feel disposed to bet,
Marie !

A tempest drives across the wave,
Marie ;
With triplets in the treble stave,
Marie ;
The player pounds. With bulging eyes
Th' excited vocalist replies ;
The maddened octaves drown his cries,
Marie !

The storm is past. We hear again,
Marie,
The simple thirds, the waltz refrain,
Marie ;
We only see some drifting wrack,

An empty bunk, a battered smack,
Alas! Alas!! Alack!!! Alack!!!!
Marie!

O good old words, O 'tears that rise,'
Marie!

O good young fisher-lad that dies,
Marie!

We leave you on the lonely shore;—
You wave your hands for evermore,
A bleak, disgusted semaphore,
Marie!

IN SEVERAL KEYS

No. 2

THE BALLAD OF MORBID MOTHERS

WHY do you sit in the churchyard weeping?

Why do you cling to the dear old graves,
When the dim, drear mists of the dusk are
creeping

Out of the marshes in wan, white waves?

Darling, I know you're a slave to sorrow;

Dearie, I *know* that the world is cruel;
But *you'll* be in bed with a cold to-morrow,
I shall be running upstairs with gruel.

Why do you weep on a tombstone, Mammy,

Sobbing alone in the drizzling sleet,
When the chill mists rise, and the wind strikes
clammy?

Think of your bones, and your poor old feet!

Darling, I know that you feel lugubrious ;
Dearie, I *know* you must work this off ;
But graveyards are not, as a rule, salubrious,
Whence the expression, a 'churchyard cough.'

[*The Old Lady explains her eccentric behaviour.*]

Why do I ululate, dear my dearie,
Coiled on a nastily mildewed tomb,
When the horned owl hoots, and the world is
weary,
Weary of sorrow, and swamped in gloom ?
Childie my child, 'tis a cogent question ;
Dearie my dear, if you wish to know,
'Tis not that I suffer from indigestion,
But that the Public ordains it so.

Babies, and Aunties, and dying brothers,
Boom for a season, as 'loves' may part ;
But the old shop-ballad of Morbid Mothers
Dives to the depths of the Public's heart.

Dearie, with booms, at the best, precarious,
All but the permanent needs must fail ;
And Childie, if Mammy became hilarious,
Maimmy would never command a sale.

THE STORY OF RUD.

ONCE for a tight little Island, fonder of ha'pence
than kicks,
Rud., a maker of verses, sang of an Empire of
Bricks,
Sang of the Sons of that Empire—told them
they came of the Blood—
Rubbing it under their noses. *Read ye the Story
of Rud.!*

Pleased was the Public to hear it—rose in their
hundreds to sing—
Swallowed it, chewed it, and gurgled: 'Verily,
this is the thing!
Thus do we wallop our foemen—roll 'em away
in the mud—
This is the People that *we* are. Glory and
laurels for Rud.!'

Later he pictured a Panic—later he pictured a Scare,
Pictured the burning of coast towns—skies in a reddening glare—
Pictured the Mafficking Million—collared, abortive, alone—
Out of the duty he owed them, pictured them down to the bone.

Sick was the Public to read it—passed it along to 'the Sports'—
'Fools in the full-flannelled breeches, oafs in the muddy-patched shorts'—
Loafers and talkers and writers, furtively whispering low—
'Say that it's like 'em—it *may* be—nobody ever need know.

'Rud.,—would he drive us to Barracks—make of us militant hordes—
Broke to the spit of the pom-pom—trained to the flashing of swords?—

Pooh! It is *these* that he goes for—Sport is
the bubble he pricks—
Doubt not but *we* are The People—Bricks of an
Empire of Bricks!'

What of that maker of verses? Did he not
answer the call:
'Loafers and talkers and writers, children or
knaves are ye all;
Look at the lines ere ye quote them: read,
ere ye cackle as geese!'
Nay. But he passed from The People—left them
to stew in their grease.

But a hyphen-ish growl makes answer: 'Ye that
would take from the whole
The one line robbed of the context, nor win to
the straight-set Goal,
Is it thus ye will fend the warning—thus ye will
move the shame
From the Mob that watch by the thousand, to
the dozens that play the game?
Still will ye pay at the turnstile—thronging the
rope-ringed Match,

Where the half-back fumbles the leather, or the
deep-field butters the catch ?

Will ye thank your gods (being 'umble) that
the fool and the oaf are found

In the field, at the goal or the wicket, and *not* in
the seats around ?

Not in the Saturday Squallers—men of a higher
grade—

That lay down a law they know not, of a game
that they have not played ?

Holding the folly of flannel, still will ye teach
the Schools

That Wisdom is dressed in shoddy, and how
should the Wise be fools ?

Not doubting but ye are The People—ye are the
Sons of The Blood ?

Loafers and talkers and writers,—*Read ye the
Verses of Rud. !'*



THE HAPPY ENDING



STANZAS WRITTEN IN DEJECTION

I AM tired of the day with its profitless labours,
And tired of the night with its lack of repose,
I am sick of myself, my surroundings, and neighbours,
Especially Aryan Brothers and crows ;
O land of illusory hope for the needy,
O centre of soldiering, thirst, and shikar,
When a broken-down exile begins to get seedy,
What a beast of a country you are !

There are many, I know, that have honestly
drawn a
Most moving description of pleasures to win
By the exquisite carnage of such of your fauna
As Nature provides with a 'head' or a 'skin' ;

I know that a pig is magnificent sticking ;
But good as you are in the matter of sports,
When a person 's alive, so to put it, and kicking,
You 're a brute when a man 's out of sorts.

For the moment he feels the effects of the
weather—

A mild go of fever—a touch of the sun—
He arrives with a jerk at the end of his tether,
And finds your attractions a bit overdone ;
Impatiently conscious of boredom and worry,
He sits in his misery, scowling at grief,
With a face like a pallid *rechauffée* of curry,
And a head like a lump of boiled beef.

I am sick of the day (as I happened to mention),
And sick of the night (as I stated before),
And it 's oh, for the wings of a dove or a pension
To carry me home to a happier shore !
And oh, to be off, homeward bound, on the briny,
Away from the tropics—away from the heat,
And to take off a shocking old hat to the Shiny,
As I shake off her dust from my feet !

THE FINEST VIEW

AWAY, away ! The plains of Ind
Have set their victim free ;
I give my sorrows to the wind,
My sun-hat to the sea ;
And, standing with a chosen few,
I watch a dying glow,
The passing of the Finest View
That all the world can show.

It would not fire an artist's eye,
This View whereof I sing ;
Poets, no doubt, would pass it by
As quite a common thing ;
The Tourist with belittling sniff
Would find no beauties there—
He couldn't if he would, and if
He could he wouldn't care.

Only for him that turns the back
On dark and evil days
It throws a glory down his track
That sets his heart ablaze ;
A charm to make the wounded whole,
Which wearied eyes may draw
Luxuriously through the soul,
Like cocktails through a straw.

I have seen strong men moved to tears
When gazing o'er the deep,
Hard men, whom I have known for years,
Nor dreamt that they could weep ;
Even myself, though stern and cold
Beyond the common line,
Cannot, for very joy, withhold
The tribute of my brine.

Farewell, farewell, thou best of Views !
I leave thee to thy pain,
And, while I have the power to choose,
We shall not meet again ;

But, 'mid the scenes of joy and mirth,
My fancies oft will turn
Back to the Finest Sight on Earth,
The Bombay Lights—*astern* !

HAVEN

HERE, in mine old-time harbourage installed,
Lulled by the murmurous hum of London's
traffic
To that full calm which may be justly called
Seraphic,

I praise the gods ; and vow, for my escape
From the hard grip of premature Jehannun,
One golden-tissued bottle of the grape
Per annum.

For on this day, from Orient toils enlarged,
Kneeling, I kissed the parent soil at Dover,
Where a huge porter in his orbit charged
Me over ;

Flashed in the train by Shorncliffe's draughty
camp ;
Gazed on the hurrying landscape's pastoral
graces,
Old farms, and happy fields (a trifle damp
In places) ;

Passed the grim suburbs, indigent and bare
Of natural foliage, but bravely flying
Frank garlandry of last week's underwear
Out drying ;

And so to Town ; and with that blessed sight
I, a poor fevered wreck, forgot to shiver—
Forgot to mourn the Burden of my White
Man's Liver ;

And felt my bosom heave, my breast expand,
With thoughts too sweet, too deep for empty
cackle,
Such thoughts as nothing but a first-class Band
Could tackle :

Till, from its deeps, my celebrated smile
(Which friends called Marvel) clove my jaws
asunder,
Lucid, intense, and all men stood awhile
In wonder!

Let none approach me now, for I have dined ;
The fire is bright ; Havana's choice aroma
Infects my being with a pleasant kind
Of coma ;

Calmly I contemplate my future lot :
I reconstruct the past—it fails to strike me
With aught of horror (pity there are not
More like me !)—

My bosom's lord sits lightly on my breast ;
The East grows dim ; and every hour I stuck
to it
Imparts a richer brightness to the West,
Good luck to it !



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